WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR. GT 4/16/93

'Normalizing' deviant behavior

Daniel Patrick Moynihan, easily the most original thinker in the Senate, and its only stylist, has published a brief essay in The American Scholar that he calls "Defining Deviancy Down." What it tells us is that societies handle the growth of deviant behavior by redefining it.

If every other person began to stutter, to stutter would cease to be thought abnormal. The crime rate is such that we can no longer experience the shock it ought to bring.

Moynihan quotes an arresting figure of speech, written to him by the same judge (Edwin Torres of the New York State Supreme Court) who had spoken from the bench on how "the slaughter of the innocents marches unabated: subway riders, bodega owners, cab drivers, babies; in laundromats, at cash machines, on elevators, in hallways." In his letter, the judge spoke of "this numbness, this near narcoleptic state (that) can diminish the human condition to the level of combat infantrymen, who, in protracted campaigns, can eat their battlefield rations seated on the bodies of the fallen, friend and foe alike. A society that loses its sense of outrage is doomed to extinction."

Moynihan sets out to explore a proposition of the sociologist Emile Durkheim, written a hundred years ago. What Durkheim said was that "deviancy" doesn't really fluctuate. There is always a criminal, deviant minority, and it is always about the same size.

But of course the only way to validate the Durkheim rule is to change the terminology of deviancy. This is done, Moynihan tells us, in various ways. The first is altruistic: You cut down the number of mental patients by coming up with tranquilizers that let them lead normal lives, and by becoming more tolerant of harmless abnormality in behavior. Or, you become "opportunistic" — and redefine deviant behavior in such a way as to give the impression that what was thought to be awry is now straight.

"In the years from 1963 to 1965, the Policy Planning Staff of the U.S. Department of Labor picked up the first tremors of 'the earthquake that shuddered through the American family in the past 20 years.' The New York Times recently provided a succinct accounting" of that earthquake: "Thirty years ago, 1 in every 40 white children was born to an unmarried mother; today it is 1 in 5, according to federal data. Among blacks, 2 of 3 children are born to an unmarried mother; 30 years ago, the figure was 1 in 5."

What is not handled, in the course of "opportunistic" management of the data, or in the course of "normalizing" the data, is their concrete meaning.

Moynihan at one point amused himself by playing around with correlations. "I published an article showing that the correlation between eighth-grade math scores and distance of state capitals from the Canadian border was .522, a respectable showing. By contrast, the correlation with per pupil expenditure was a derisory .203. I offered the policy proposal that states wishing to improve their schools should move closer to Canada."

But the lengths to which some will go to "normalize" rather than to cope with is illustrated with creepy exactitude by a woman scholar (I shield her name) who handles the question of marriage in this way:

"The life course is full of exciting options. The lifestyle options available to individuals seeking a fulfilling personal relationship include living a heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual single lifestyle; living in a commune; having a group marriage; being a single parent; or living together.

"Divorce represents part of the normal family life cycle. It should not be viewed as either deviant or tragic, as it has been in the past. Rather, it establishes a process for 'uncoupling' and thereby serves as the foundation for individual renewal and 'new beginnings.'"

Moynihan's sophisticated treatment of the normalization of deviancy is nothing less than a cry from the heart.

Buckley is an author, syndicated columnist and editor-at-large of National Review magazine.

Grill.

Private services are scheduled. Shrine of Remem Home, 1730 E. Fountain Blvd., is handling arrange

Miss Bastian was born Dec. 9, 1949, in Iron Mou Arvid and Ruth (Rein) Mackie. Her mother survive Kingsford, Mich. She had lived in Colorado Spring

Miss Bastian also is survived by three brothers, of Belgrade, Mont., Roger Mackie of Oak Creek, Wi Mackie of Kingsford; and a sister, Janice Opsahl of

Memorial contributions may be made to the Colo Humane Society, 633 S. Eighth St., Colorado Sprin the charity of the giver's choice.

FUNERALS TODAY

Morris, Paul Harmon, 9:30 a.m., Sacred Heart Catholic Colorado Ave.

Borgens, Benjamin C., 11 a.m., Crystal Valley Ce Springs.

Putman, Eva G., 11 a.m., Jordan Chapel, AME Church,

Nelson, Luther Charles, 1 p.m., Swan-Law Funeral Ho Cascade Ave.

Ferguson, Harry Wallace, 2 p.m., St. Paul's United 2111 Carlton Ave.

Kirkpatrick, Pamela Kay, 3 p.m., Swan-Law Funeral N. Cascade Ave.

BULLETIN BOARD

Rights violations to be discussed: Public ment civil and human rights violations will be held noon and from 1 to 3 p.m. Saturday at Hillside Con 925 S. Institute St. The hearings, part of the Colora dom Campaign, are sponsored by the Colorado Spr Coalition. Call 632-6189 or 475-7255 for informati

Spring carnival slated: The Falcon Element carnival will be from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday at 12050 Falcon Highway. It is sponsored by the Falc Parent Teacher Organization.

UNITED STATES SPACE FOUND

GENERAL JAMES E. HILL, USAF(RET) CHAIRMAN

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ANNOUNCEMENT

The astronaut who was on the first to land on the moon will conclude Ninth National Space Symposium. will be a memorial service at the monument in Colorado that names ten American Astronauts who gave lives in the nation's space program.

The public is invited on Friday, Apr at 4:30 P.M., when Astronaut Dr. Aldrin will pay tribute to these lost a nauts and will lay a wreath at the S Astronaut Memorial. This memorial be held at the Veteran's Honor Cou the Shrine of Remembrance Ma leums, 1730 East Fountain Blvd. in C rado Springs. (Located at Fou Blvd., just west of Union Blvd., loo the tall flag pole.)

Brig. Gen. Robert Dickman of th Force Space Command Headqua will also speak during the short mony. Colonel James H. Rix, repre ing the Honorary Trustees of the V an's Honor Court of the Shrin Remembrance will open the ceremo The Honor Guard from the 21st S Wing and buglers from the Air F Academy will assist in this ceremon

Buzz Aldrin was on the Apollo 11 with Neil Armstrong and Mike Co Armstrong and Aldrin were the firs mans to touch the surface of the m

The public is cordially invited to a the ceremony.

★★★★★

"America the Beautiful" Rose Gardens & Cremation

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